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Islands Trust seeks public input on governance options

The Islands Trust has released a report by Neilson-Welch Consulting that identifies options for changing political representation in the Islands Trust Area. It is now seeking input from those who live and/or own property in the Islands Trust Area.

The report identifies options for the size of Local Trust Committees; the structure of the Islands Trust Council; and coordination between the Islands Trust and regional districts, focusing on coordination with the Capital Regional District at this point. The Ministry of Community Services and the Capital Regional District shared in the costs of the third party study.

'Islanders have been telling us that there is a need for change so that the Islands Trust can meet new challenges and can better represent the issues and concerns of Island communities,' said Kim Benson, Chair of the Islands Trust Council. 'A number of governance issues are of particular concern to Salt Spring Island and some of the larger Island communities.'

'In response to what we've been hearing, Trust Council formed a Governance Task Force to review the political structure necessary to sustain the Islands Trust Area well into the future. Political representation was the first priority identified by the task force, which includes 13 of the 26 Islands Trust Area's elected trustees,' Benson said.

'If there are to be any changes to political structure, the Minister would need to present them to the provincial

legislature in the spring of 2008, so that they could be in place in time for the next election. Any changes that would alter the number of trustees on a local trust committee or at Trust Council would require significant legislative amendments by the province to the *Islands Trust Act*,' Benson added.

Eleven scheduled meetings are now underway throughout the Islands to hear the views of Islanders and non-resident property owners. Information on the review and some of the options for change will be presented at the meetings by Trust Council Chair Kim Benson and Chief Administrative Officer Linda Adams, followed by a question and answer period and an opportunity for people to provide comments.

'We want to emphasize that the Islands Trust Council does not consider the report the final word on governance,' said Benson. 'The purpose of the report and of our public consultation meetings is to encourage thinking, discussion and input, not to preempt or limit anyone's ideas. We want to hear the ideas of those who live and/or own property in the Islands Trust Area.' The deadline for input is May 21.

In June, after considering public input, Trust Council will decide if it wishes to recommend amendments to the *Act*.

The meetings schedule can be viewed and the governance study can read or downloaded by going to the Islands Trust web site: www.islandstrust.bc.ca. Reference copies of the report will also be available at public libraries in the Islands Trust Area. ✍

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